The Reichstag Fire Trial provided, for those that had eyes to see, a clear indication of the essential similarity between Soviet and Nazi terrorism. A half-witted Dutchman named Van der Lubbe, and a number of German and foreign Communists, were charged with having set fire to the Reichstag building. As in the Soviet trials, the counsel for the defence were cowed and futile, the evidence heard was confused and sometimes contradictory, the atmosphere of the Court suggested rather a tribal blood-sacrifice than a judicial inquiry, and Van der Lubbe's bearing recalled Mr. Thornton's description of bis state of mind when he succumbed to Ogpu pressure and signed the confession which he afterwards retracted: 1 thought it would be better for me to sign the protocol in which my supposed crimes were set out. But I am not really guilty of these crimes … I felt helpless . . . apathetic/ One of the foreign Communists, Dmitrov, proved tougher than anyone Soviet judges had been required to handle, and delighted many with his spirited and vivacious retorts; while Mr. Pritt, instead of applauding the Nazi version of the judicial procedure he found so admirable in the U.S.S.R., showed his displeasure by participating in a model Reichstag Fire Trial which was arranged in London, under Liberal auspices. Van der Lubbe, who provided Mr. Stephen Spender with the subject for a poem, was executed; the German accused were imprisoned and no more heard of; and the foreign Communists were deported. Dmitrov, one of the last political exiles to gain admission to the U.S.S.R., was given an enthusiastic reception

in Moscow, where he soon became an important influence in the Comintern. As the memory of his triumph faded, and Soviet policy grew less sympathetically disposed towards the aspirations of international revolutionaries, his importance diminished.[19]

[19] While it lasted, Dmitrov was, perhaps, the chief hero among Communists and. their sympathisers, at any rate outside the U.S.S.R. He made a romantic appeal, whereas the Soviet panel of heroes (apart from the fact that fluctuations were difficult to keep pace with) were somewhat drab, and from long occupancy of the centre of the revolutionary stage, had lost much of their bloom. In *The Novel and the People,* Ralph Fox refers to Dmitiov